



State of Alabama Attorney General
Troy King

www.ago.alabama.gov

11 South Union Street, 3rd Floor
Montgomery, AL 36130
334-242-7300

What is child abuse?

Child abuse is harm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare which can occur through non-accidental physical or mental injury; sexual abuse or attempted sexual abuse; sexual exploitation or attempted sexual exploitation.

Signs of Physical Abuse

Physical Indicators

- Unexplained bruises, welts, human bite marks, bald spots
- Unexplained burns, especially cigarette or immersion burns
- Unexplained fractures, lacerations, or abrasions
- Swollen areas
- Evidence of delayed or inappropriate treatment for injuries

Behavioral Indicators

- Self destructive
- Withdrawn and/or aggressive – behavioral extremes
- Arrives at school early or stays late as if afraid to be at home
- Chronic runaway (adolescents)
- Complains of soreness or moves uncomfortably
- Wears inappropriate clothing to cover body (ex. sweaters; long sleeves in hot weather)
- Bizarre explanation injuries
- Wary of adult contact
- Apprehensive when other children cry

Signs of Neglect

Physical Indicators

- Abandonment
- Unattended medical needs

- Consistent hunger, inappropriate dress, poor hygiene
- Lice, distended stomach, emaciated
- Inadequate nutrition

Behavioral Indicators

- Regularly displays fatigue or listlessness (falls asleep in class)
- Steals food, begs from classmates
- Reports that no caretaker is at home
- Frequently absent or tardy
- Self destructive
- School dropout (adolescent)
- Extreme loneliness and need for affection

Signs of Sexual Abuse

Physical Indicators

Sexual abuse may be **touching** – fondling, molesting, oral sex, intercourse, or **non-touching** – obscene language, pornography, exposure.

- Torn, stained, or bloody underclothing
- Pain, swelling, or itching in the genital area
- Difficulty walking or sitting
- Bruises or bleeding in genital area
- Venereal disease
- Frequent urinary tract or yeast infections

Behavioral Indicators

- Withdrawal from others, chronic depression
- Excessive seductiveness
- Role reversal, overly concerned for siblings
- Poor self-esteem, lack of confidence
- Peer problems, lack of involvement
- Massive weight change / change in appetite
- Suicide attempts (especially adolescents)
- Crying, nausea, upset stomach
- Inappropriate sex play or premature understanding of sex

- Clinging to caregiver
- Unwilling to change clothes in front of anyone
- Exhibits fantasy or baby-like behavior
- Frequent nightmares / bed wetting
- Change in school performance

Signs of Emotional Abuse

Physical Indicators

Emotional abuse may be name-calling, insults, put-downs, etc., or it may be terrorization, isolation, humiliation, rejection, corruption, or ignoring.

- Speech disorders
- Delayed physical development
- Substance abuse
- Ulcers, asthma, severe allergies

Behavioral Indicators

- Habit disorders (sucking, rocking, biting)
- Antisocial, destructive
- Neurotic traits (sleep disorders, inhibition of play)
- Passive and aggressive behavioral extremes
- Delinquent behavior (especially adolescents)
- Developmentally delayed

When to Report

Make a report when you know or suspect that a child is being abused or neglected. Use your professional training and expertise to make this decision. It is not necessary to prove that the abuse or neglect happened; you just have to be reasonably suspicious. It is better to err on the side of wrongful reporting rather than to risk further injury or the death of a child. Do not delay in reporting if you do not have all the needed information. Additional information can be added later.

Attorney General Troy King requests that this list of child abuse indicators be distributed to all state school teachers. This list comes from the website of Child Protect Children's Advocacy Center in Montgomery at www.childprotect.org.